



## HOWARD COUNTY TOURISM NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Get in on the Best Deals in Dining Out

**Howard County Tourism's Newest Promotion, Winter Restaurant Weeks Features NEW Prix Fix Menus From \$10.09 To \$40.09 At Over 20 Local Restaurants....Savor The Savings!**

*Ellicott City, MD (January 19, 2009)*—Howard County Tourism says give yourself and your budget a break! Enjoy the warm hospitality and delicious creativity of Howard County's finest chefs during Howard County Tourism Winter Restaurant Weeks February 23 to March 8, 2009. With over 20 participating restaurants, residents and out-of-town guests will appreciate a chance to visit their favorite restaurants and try new ones, all at great new prices. Participating restaurants will offer prix fixe menus from \$10.09 to \$40.09 (beverages, tax, gratuity not included; promotions and menus vary).

Tourism offices across the U.S. have hosted Restaurant Weeks in response to the popularity of culinary tourism, while being mindful of today's travelers' budgets. Joe Barbera, owner of AIDA Bistro & Wine Bar, member of Tourism's Board of Directors said, "Restaurant Weeks gives us all a chance to celebrate the many and distinct local restaurants in Howard County. In this uncertain economy, customers have asked us to offer value-priced options and an incentive to try or return to restaurants in Howard County. I hear customers say they want to patronize local restaurants because they see the value in having terrific dining options within 20 minutes of their homes. I say 'You've Gotta Support Your Local Restaurants!'"

#### **Savor The Savings – and the Menus!**

Jordan Naftal, owner Jordan's Steakhouse and President-elect of the Tourism Board of Directors, said "This is a really good opportunity for guests to try us for the first time. They may have heard we are very expensive, but they will find we provide a tremendous value for our guests." Diners are sure to find plenty to savor in every corner of Howard County. From wine bars and steakhouses to tapas and seafood, there is an amazing diversity of dining choices close to home. Howard County's most creative chefs will dazzle diners with their creations, while beautiful settings and superb service make dining out close to home a true *gourmet getaway*. "We Staycation-ed during Howard County's first-ever Restaurant Weeks and became foodies. With our taste buds, we traveled to France, Spain and Italy without leaving Howard County and applauded the creations of local celebrity chefs like Dan Wecker of Elkridge Furnace Inn" said Rachelina Bonacci, Executive Director of Howard County Tourism. She added, "Tourism is thrilled that local restaurateurs are again partnering to do Winter Restaurant Weeks."

#### **NEW Prix Fix Menus \$10.09 to \$40.09**

In addition, Howard County restaurants are introducing an innovative pricing structure during this promotion. With fixed price menus ranging from \$10.09 to \$40.09, restaurants will be able to offer one or more fixed price menus to customers at four price points; \$10.09, \$20.09, \$30.09, and \$40.09, for one to four courses. Participating restaurants will have the option of offering one or more of the pricing options to customers. Some restaurants may also add a wine option as one of the courses. This flexible pricing will offer diners the chance to customize their choices.

#### **NEW Reservation Option**

### **www.OpenTable.com or Call Participating Restaurants Directly**

To see a list of participating restaurants, go to [www.visithowardcounty.com](http://www.visithowardcounty.com) and go to the "Savor It" Restaurant Week icon on the homepage. Tourism's site links directly to the restaurants. Reservations are recommended (required for Toby's Dinner Theatre), and should be made by calling the restaurant directly. Diners can also make reservations through Open Table for member restaurants, which are noted on the website with a link to Open Table. ("Book Now"). Participation / promotions vary by restaurant.

### **NEW Frequent Diners Passport – You've Got to Dine to Win!**

An added incentive to savor even more savings at several participating restaurants is the chance to win a **\$100.00 gift certificate from the Restaurant Association of Maryland (RAM)**. From February 23 to March 8, food lovers can visit new places they've wanted to try, or revisit their favorites – while enjoying fixed price menus from just \$10.09 to \$40.09 (excluding beverages, tax and gratuity). New to Howard County Winter Restaurant Weeks is the Frequent Diners Passport. Simply pick up a Passport Card at the first restaurant you visit during the promotion, and have it validated after each meal. At the end of Restaurant Weeks, either drop the card off or mail it to Howard County Tourism's Visitor Center in Historic Ellicott City (8267 Main Street, Side Entrance, Ellicott City, MD 21043.) A winner will be chosen from the entries and announced on Monday, March 16. All entries must be postmarked by March 10, 2009.

Restaurant Association of Maryland Dining Gift Certificates are the perfect gift for friends, families and business colleagues. RAM Dining gift certificates are redeemable for goods and services at hundreds of fine Restaurant Association member restaurants throughout the State of Maryland. If you'd like to find out more about which restaurants are accepting RAM gift certificates, please visit

[www.marylandrestaurants.com](http://www.marylandrestaurants.com)

### **NEW BLOG! *Business Monthly's* "Noshing with the Nagle's" column now official Howard County Restaurant Weeks Blog**

Michael Nagle, an attorney with Nagle & Zaller in Columbia, and Debbie Nagle, a realtor with Keller Williams in Ellicott City, recently began penning restaurant reviews in the *Business Monthly* (the must-read newspaper of the Howard County and B/W corridor.) They have agreed to blog daily about their exciting experiences during Howard County's Restaurant Winter Weeks. So tune in and stay tuned to Tourism's blog [http://visithowardcounty.typepad.com/visit\\_howard\\_county/](http://visithowardcounty.typepad.com/visit_howard_county/) as the Nagle's nosh and savor the savings, meet chefs, snag secret recipes, taste wines and take you behind the scenes of Restaurant Weeks.

### **NEW PARTICIPANTS!**

#### **Toby's Dinner Theatre**

Toby's Dinner Theatre of Columbia will be offering a full night of dinner and entertainment for \$30.09! During Howard County's Winter Restaurant Week, theatre lovers will enjoy Toby's fabulous main entree buffet, salad bar and dessert, including your make-your-own ice cream sundae bar. This will be followed by one of two musicals "Mid-Life, the Crisis Musical" or "High School Musical," so be sure to call for reservations and mention Restaurant Week.

#### **Wine Dinners at Belmont Manor**

Welcoming guests with style and grace has been a Belmont tradition since 1738. Now this splendid manor, situated on a private 82-acre picturesque setting, will delight you during Howard County Winter Restaurant Weeks with its special wine dinners. Recognized for its culinary excellence and attention to detail, Chef James will create a memorable menu for you and your guests.

### **HOWARD COUNTY RESTAURANT WEEKS: WINTER 2009 PARTICIPANTS**

AIDA BISTRO & WINE BAR (Columbia Gateway)

ALEXANDRA'S at Turf Valley Resort (Ellicott City)

BELMONT MANOR (Elkridge)

BISTRO BLANC (Glenelg)

CACAO LANE (Historic Ellicott City)

CAFÉ de PARIS (Columbia)  
COPELAND'S of New Orleans (Columbia Towncenter)  
CRAB SHANTY (Ellicott City)  
DONNAS CAFE (Columbia)  
ELKRIDGE FURNACE INN (Elkridge)  
GREYSTONE GRILL (Columbia)  
JORDAN'S STEAKHOUSE (Historic Ellicott City)  
MORGAN'S GRILL at the Hilton Columbia (Columbia)  
OZ CHOPHOUSE (Maple Lawn)  
RAM'S HEAD TAVERN (Savage Mill)  
RANAZUL (Maple Lawn)  
TERSIGUEL'S FRENCH COUNTRY RESTAURANT (Historic Ellicott City)  
THE DIAMONDBACK TAVERN (Historic Ellicott City)  
THE KING'S CONTRIVANCE (Columbia)  
THE MELTING POT (Columbia)  
THE RUMOR MILL (Historic Ellicott City)  
TOBY'S DINNER THEATRE in Columbia  
VICTORIA GASTRO PUB (Columbia)

### **LOCAL RESTAURANTS: Generous Community Partners**

"Restaurants in Howard County are very generous with their time, treasures and talents. Each year, we donate tens of thousands of dollars worth of food, gift certificates and personal time to charities. These net out to many more tens of thousands of dollars to local charitable organizations. Our collective support helps to maintain local charities." Said Joe Barbera of AIDA Bistro & Wine Bar.

### **RISE OF CULINARY TRAVEL IN AMERICA: Stats**

The first-ever national culinary tourism report from the U.S. Travel Association states that culinary tourism is a growing travel trend, with 27 million travelers, or 17 percent of American leisure travelers, engaged in culinary or wine-related activities while traveling within the past three years. The new U.S. Travel Association report surveyed more than 2,300 U.S. leisure travelers.

### **RESTAURANT WEEKS: A Brief History**

In 1992 the nation's eyes were focused on New York City as it prepared to host the Democratic National Convention. It was the perfect time to demonstrate that NYC was indeed the restaurant capital of the world, and so a promotional campaign was devised. One hundred participating restaurants offered a prix-fixe, three-course lunch for \$19.92. The promotion was successful beyond anyone's expectations, and "Restaurant Week" became a Big Apple yearly event. As its popularity grew, it was extended to two weeks and is now done twice a year. The idea of Restaurant Week soon caught on across the country. Boston, Atlanta, San Diego, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Baltimore --all have their own Restaurant Weeks, now proudly we can add Howard County, MD to that list!

### **HOWARD COUNTY TOURISM... A Destination Marketing Organization**

Howard County Tourism, Inc., a non-profit, membership-based organization funded by generous grants from the State and County. Howard County Tourism is recognized by both Howard County Government and the Maryland Office of Tourism Development as the official Destination Management Organization for Howard County, Maryland. Tourism's mission is to increase, develop and promote tourism in Howard County by featuring the county's unique sites, services, products and people by creating marketing opportunities like Restaurant Weeks. For more information contact Howard County Tourism or check out our website [www.VisitHowardCounty.com](http://www.VisitHowardCounty.com).

# HOWARD COUNTY TOURISM: Q&A

## Meet Local Chefs & Owners of Howard County Winter Restaurant Weeks

**Tell us about some interesting / fun happenings during the summer promotion (loved when Erik at Cafe de Paris told me that customers would tell him 'Joe from AIDA says hello' then he would tell them well then tell Eric at the Crab Shanty I said hello when you go there tomorrow night...)**

JORDAN NAFTAL (Jordan's Steakhouse)

One of our guests needed a place to go for a first date, ...enter...., Jordan's for restaurant weeks. I hear things have been fantastic ever since.

CHEF DAN WECKER by Sarah Beth Cassel (Elkridge Furnace Inn)

Everyone deserves to eat well, and what better way to treat yourself than to a delicious dinner. We are definitely "off the beaten path", hidden alongside the banks of the Patapsco river in lower Elkridge. This helps us to get noticed alongside other great local restaurant gems.

DONNA CRIVELLO (Donna's)

We love to come up with some new dishes for special events. We now do a Saturday night chef's tasting menu, with wine that everyone seems to enjoy. And like restaurant week, it offers a great value and a chance to try someone new. People think that we just do coffee and salads and sandwiches, but I have expanded the menu with a full dinner menu and a complete bar.

**Anything extra special you are doing during Howard County's Winter Restaurant Weeks, this is your chance to brag a bit, contest for your servers, new offerings, wine pairings?**

JOE BARBERA (AIDA Bistro & Wine Bar)

We will offer our three course prix fixe menu at dinner for \$30.09. Our theme of supporting local will also showcase local libations as we will expand this offer to add a wine/beer flight featuring local/regional wines/beers from Maryland and Virginia for \$40.09.

KYLE MUELHAUSER by Erin B. McNaboe (Rams Head Tavern)

Rams Head will also be having a beer release, Queen Anne Beer, on Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, from 4-6pm. Enjoy limited edition glassware with \$1 refills. Join us for Happy Hour prior to enjoying Restaurant Week, from 4-7pm enjoy \$2.50 drafts, house wines and rail drinks, and from 5-7pm enjoy free happy hour food... really get a bargain for your evening out! Plus, you can make a day out of it... spend the day shopping at Savage Mill and enjoy Restaurant Week in the evening; you never have to move your car!

DONNA CRIVELLO (Donna's)

On Mondays Donna's is doing "Mangia Monday" \$10. hearty pastas and specials on wines (\$12. bottles) and appetizers and desserts. TAPAS TUESDAYS! \$5. small plates and sangria! Wednesday. Donna's Cooking Classes (see website for details donnas.com.) Thursdays, WINE TASTINGS : \$18. for a flight of four great wines, with complimentary hors d'oeuvres. Saturdays: special chef's tasting menu: \$40. four courses with wine. (\$30. without wine) and LIVE JAZZ. Saturday and Sunday brunches with \$3.00 mimosas.

**Tell us something about you / your business, we know that the restaurant owners / chefs are ROCKSTARS of this promotion! How and why are did you enter into this crazy business?**

JORDAN NAFTAL (Jordan's Steakhouse)

After earning 35 cents a day washing dishes when I was eleven, I knew I was blessed with a career destiny.

JOE BARBERA (AIDA Bistro & Wine Bar)

"Everything you ever wanted to know about your local chef/restaurateur, but were afraid to ask" (thanks Woody Allen!) Our Chef, Sean Riggs, is from Canada, eh. His specialty is braising and he does enjoy

making changes to the menu to celebrate the colder weather. Sean recently became an American citizen. AIDA Bistro is named after my mother, Aida, who was named by her Italian immigrant father after the Verdi opera.

CHEF DAN WECKER by Sarah Beth Cassel (Elkridge Furnace Inn)

A Lancaster, PA native, Chef Dan Wecker's passion for cooking began in his childhood when he became the designated camp cook at scouting retreats. Dan then started cooking at a concession stand at a local ice rink. At the ripe young age of fourteen, he was in the kitchen kneading dough for pizzas and making chicken and specialty burgers. After high school, he expanded his horizons, literally, by traveling overseas to Australia with a foreign student exchange program. While there, he kindled his passion for cooking by winning the distinction of Best Apple Jelly and Best Mustard Pickles at his school in Towoomba.

Upon returning to the states, his formal culinary education began in earnest at a local French restaurant under the auspices of French Chef Michelle Beaupin. There, he trained in all disciplines of French cuisine from pastry to saucier to boucher (butcher) in a four and a half year period. After his marriage to wife Donna, Dan and his new bride began a successful catering company in 1980 and then found his biggest challenge to date in 1988 in Elkridge, MD.

Dan and his brother Steve, who has since moved on, discovered the sorely neglected remains of what is now The Elkridge Furnace Inn in 1988, and persuaded the state of Maryland to allow them to lease the property and begin immediate restoration. In 1991, the buildings that encompass The Elkridge Furnace Inn were Ellicott City's Decorator Showhouse. Shortly thereafter, Dan began on-site catering on the property. In 1994, the restaurant opened during a blizzard, but that didn't stop Wecker from growing the business to its present day 6-day a week schedule featuring brunch, lunch, and dinner.

DONNA CRIVELLO (Donna's)

I always wanted to cook for people and entertain...so here at Donna's we can do that!

**Numbers, give me something about the success of summer, the zany hours, the quote we've been using is that one of you said "it was like Mothers Day everyday." Did the promotion bring new customers to you?**

JORDAN NAFTAL (Jordan's Steakhouse)

We had 45% increase in business the first week. The second week was flat, however we saw guests that shied away from us for 6 years thinking they could not afford it. This was their chance, and we have been seeing many of them since.

JOE BARBERA (AIDA Bistro & Wine Bar)

We saw a 40% increase in sales during a traditionally slow time. Many of the customers were new and have since returned to the restaurant.

CHEF DAN WECKER by Sarah Beth Cassel (Elkridge Furnace Inn)

The promotion brought new and old customers. Some existing customers would call to make reservations saying that they were inviting friends of theirs who had never been before and felt it was a great opportunity to introduce them to us. The servers loved being busy. It shot our numbers up very well and we felt that the whole program was a great success and we didn't hesitate for a second when asked if we wanted to participate in this up-coming restaurant weeks.

## **ADDITIONAL MEDIA CONTACTS:**

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